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ABSTRACT

A brief summary of conclusions reached by consultants and an interpretive summary of reports made by small discussion groups during the Navajo Community School Board Training Project are presented in this report. Major conclusions are that Navajos took the training sessions seriously, that the trainees could not be rushed, that the trainees recognized the values of both the old and the new in such matters as curriculum, that the greatest area of sensitivity was in the field of relationships, and that the trainees recognized their own limitations and freely expressed a desire for continued training. Topics discussed in the interpretive summary of reports include curriculum development, parent-school and community-school relationships, training problems, and staff selection. (PS)

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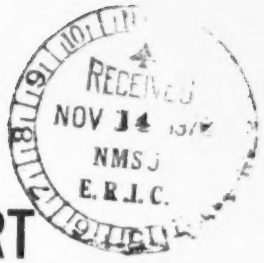

SUMMARY REPORT OF TRAINING ACTIVITIES

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NAVAJO SCHOOL BOARD
TRAINING PROJECT

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NAVAJO COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD

TRAINING PROJECT

SUMMARY REPORT OF TRAINING ACTIVITIES

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INTRODUCTION

For three years approximately 300 adult Navajos have assembled eight times during the school year at five reservation locations for school board training. The sessions have lasted from three to five hours.

The first year (1969-1970) training time was spent largely on study of the Navajo Community School Board Manual with only a minimum of group discussion. At the time listening-to-a-speaker was favored as an instructional method.

The second year (1970-1971) panel and small group discussions were introduced as the school board members became more experienced, more confident and willing to share their thoughts and ideas with fellow trainees.

The third year (1971-1972) the members

(through a questionaire) chose small discussion groups as the predominant training method. Also from the questionaire they selected the list of topics to be covered during the training year.

All training, discussion and reports have been conducted in both Navajo and English.

What appears is an overall brief summary of conclusions reached by the consultants along with an interpretive summary of reports made by small discussion groups of major topic items covered.

Wayne T. Pratt
Dr. Irving W. Stout

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In grateful appreciation to Mr. Bob King, Head, Tribal Liaison (BIA) whose active participation and guidance has been a significant contribution to the training program.

In final deep appreciation to the School Principals, staffs and above all the Navajo Community School Board member trainees who have attended faithfully three years of training to upgrade their skills for community leadership.

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June, 1972

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CONCLUSIONS

1. Adult Navajos of all ages took the school board training sessions seriously in the wide range of topics and lessons studied. Their deep and abiding interest is reflected in the high percentage of attendance during the full three years of training.

2. The trainees could not be rushed. They were deliberate and wanted to hear all participants out before reaching conclusions. They were sensitive to issues involved and never made hasty decisions.

3. In such matters as the curriculum they recognized the values of both the old and the new. They wanted as much of Navajo life and customs to be taught as was consonant with living in todays world. They were clear in their

3. Cont'd.

desire that Navajo children should be completely fluent in English, learn skilled trades as well as to receive the necessary academic foundations for professional training.

4. Probably their greatest area of sensitivity was in the field of relationships--between the principal and the school board, between the school board and the parents, and between the school board and the Navajo Chapters under which the school boards are elected or appointed. They recognized that good relationships were a prerequisite for effective participation and the smooth operation of their community schools.

5. They recognized their own limitations and freely expressed the desire for continued training.

INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY

Discussion Topics: How should a school board really select a school principal? What qualities and experience should they look for in a school principal?

The groups showed good judgement in identifying the qualities and experience a principal should possess. Many were knowledgeable of the positive education requirements, particularly the need of a Masters Degree in Education. They identified other qualities the person should possess as interest in the education of the Navajo child, willing to work with parents and community people, respect for Navajo culture and the ability to get along with people.

Discussion Topic: How really should a principal and his school board improve communication; that is, work closer together in the purchase of supplies, in curriculum planning and in personnel matters?

Most of the responses pointed to the need and the desire of school boards to be informed and to be kept informed. The groups were frank in saying that Civil Service regulations should be explained to them so they could help solve personnel problems in particular. One group identified the prerequisite to improving communication as establishing a good relationship between principal and school board. They said if this is done, the principal will feel free to take problems to the board, make suggestions and propose plans for board reaction. In turn they said the board would feel free to ask questions and make suggestions if good relationships existed between board and principal.

Discussion Topic: What might a school board do to maintain a good image in the community?

The responses showed deep understanding as to the high responsibility of representing the people of the community. It was shown to be a responsibility not to be taken lightly. One group expressed the role in this way that the school board should be a tool in the involvement of parents and tribal leaders in the education process. The essence was - that to maintain a good image is to do well the duties of school board members.

Discussion Topic: <u>What are the real problems, both past and present, that have arisen in connection with the operation of your school?</u>

The groups showed deep insight in both the physical factors along with the problems of relationships that adversely effect the education of children. They were quick to point out their own problems that face them as school board members.

The wide range of problems discussed showed unusual sensitivity to the difficulties inherent in operating schools.

Discussion Topic: (Parent Relationships) What might a parent do to help a school and the staff? Be specific.

The trainees have heard much about parent relationships. Their many discussions and group reports revealed their keen awareness of the value of parent support for effective school operation. This awareness was expressed through the group reports by aiding in the physical operation of the school (helping with costumes, parties, field trips, etc.) but more importantly with suggestions that parents "should be aware of problems, should work closely with the school board, should be active in meetings" and above all "should explain to the children an understanding of and the purpose of education".

Discussion Topic: (Schools-School Board Relationships) What can a school board do that is different or in addition to what a parent might do to help a school?

Again the discussion groups listed the physical aids to helping a school but more importantly interpreted relationships in a more profound way as planning and helping to review the curriculum, meeting with parents and being a real help in solving problems.

Discussion Topic: (Curriculum) How much Navajo life and customs should be included in the curriculum of the elementary school?

The adult Navajos were deliberate and clear in their responses that Navajo life and customs should be taught but not at the expense of English, but along with English and as a help to concept development. They expressed it this way that the Navajo language should be used to get the words across to the child; should not block the

learning of English; and should be used orally along with English instruction. They were equally clear that the program of the school should foster respect for Navajo customs and traditions. Some groups set time limits for Navajo instruction.

Discussion Topics: (Use of Teachers-Aides)

All discussion groups were in complete accord on the employment and use of teacher aides. They all believed that teacher aides should be Navajo because of the language factor.

Discussion Topics: (Expanding the School's Program)

On topics relating to adult education the groups recognized basic education as the predominant need. For summer activities their suggestions went beyond recreation and included finding job opportunities as

well as promoting academic acceleration and upgrading. The importance that the adults placed on jobs and job opportunities is further reflected in their suggestions for increased vocational training.

Discussion Topics: (Support Services - Food, Transportation, Health and Social Services)

In responses to a wide range of questions the discussion groups were perceiving and frank to pin point the needs of a particular service at certain schools. They were equally knowledgeable and quick to point out where the services were adequate and good.

Discussion Topics: What is good about our Navajo Community Schools?

The training sessions ended on a very positive note. The trainees had worked on problems and problem solving. In effect,

the questions gave them the opportunity to pull together an evaluation of what effect a school board has had on the education of Navajo children. Their responses revealed deep insights in school-community and school boards relationships. The responses further revealed what they thought was important in the changes they had observed like, all races now working together to make better schools, parents helping more, academic standing of schools improved, new interest on part of community, better attendance, special programs started and good working relationships established.